



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

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Hunter: Best Option for Iraq is to “Go Iraqi”

Washington, D.C. --- U.S. House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter today called for a new policy of “sending all of the trained Iraqi battalions into the fight.” Hunter cited the fact that 33 Iraqi battalions are deployed in provinces which experience less than two attacks per day.

“More than half the provinces in Iraq have almost no violence,” said Hunter. “In fact, in nine of the 18 provinces, the average is less than one attack per day. Twenty-seven battalions of Iraqi forces are stationed in these peaceful areas.”

“More troops is the answer in Baghdad, but they don’t have to be American troops,” continued Hunter. “The Iraqi battalions which we have trained and equipped will benefit tremendously from having combat rotations. Nothing matures a military unit quicker than being deployed into actual combat operations. Unit cohesion, leadership development and a strong chain of command are all produced by battlefield operations.”

“Additionally and importantly,” said Hunter, “The deployment of Iraqi battalions to combat zones will test and hopefully validate the critical link between the civilian government of Iraq and its military leaders. When a Colonel is ordered to take his battalion to Baghdad and refuses, he must be immediately replaced with a competent and obedient battle-tested officer.”

“Military transition teams comprised of American soldiers and Marines are presently embedded with Iraqi forces,” said Hunter. “These teams, consisting of 15-20 personnel, provide expert guidance in communications, logistics, fire support and other military enablers. These teams will supply the requisite guidance and confidence-building for these previously non-deployed Iraqi battalions.”

The Pentagon is reported to be developing options that range from an increase in troops, to a longer deployment or an early exit.

“The real answer,” Hunter said, is to go “Iraqi.”

“The Iraqi forces are quickly reaching the maturity level required for stability operations,” Hunter said. “Patrolling streets in Baghdad does not require the capability of the 1st Marine Division of the 101st Airborne. Now is the time to rotate all Iraqi battalions into the fight. Such a policy will hasten the maturity of the Iraqi forces and the exit of American forces.”

On October 24, 2006, Hunter wrote a letter to President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld to encourage them to send a greater number of Iraqi forces to Baghdad.

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